

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Efficiency Reports in the Department of State

SOURCE: Mr. Fred Darnell, Chief, Performance Evaluation Branch,
Personnel Office, Department of State; interviews by
[REDACTED]

STATINTL

Table of Contents

1. Groups of Employees in the Department of State
2. Effect of the Wriston Report
3. Efficiency Reports
 - a. Civil Service Employees
 - b. Foreign Service Officers
 - c. Foreign Service Reserve Officers
 - d. Foreign Service Staff Officers and Employees
4. Duties of the Performance Evaluation Branch

1. Groups of Employees in the Department of State:

a. Employees in the Classified Civil Service.

b. Foreign Service Officers, serving by Presidential appointment pursuant to the Foreign Service Act of 1946 (Public Law 724 of the 79th Congress). This group is not subject to Civil Service rules nor veterans' preference laws. The original concept clearly was to establish an elite corps from which the top level career diplomats would emerge. This concept has been altered, at least pro tempore, by the recommendations of the Wriston Committee (see comments below in section 2).

c. Foreign Service Reserve Officers, appointed by the Department of State pursuant to the Foreign Service Act of 1946. This group is for specialists whose careers are not in the State Department. Appointments are limited to four years. A typical example is the appointment of a petroleum specialist to serve in a foreign post for a limited period of time. (Exception: a FSRO can be made a diplomatic officer, by giving him a presidential, rather than a State Department, appointment. The purpose would be to give the appointee top drawer status without the career status of an FSO.)

d. Foreign Service Staff Officers, also appointed by the Department under the Foreign Service Act. This group has Civil Service retirement rights and has a salary ceiling of \$10,000. The clerical and administrative staff are in this group.

2. The Wriston report criticized the Department for failure to recruit sufficient FSO's and thus to fill higher positions from the FSO group. It pointed to the fact that non-FSO employees were filling positions similar to those filled by FSO's. It recommended, therefore, that there should be more lateral transfer of State employees into the FSO group. Mr. Darnell suggests that this recommendation (being implemented) has changed the concept of an elite corps of generalists, that specialists are moving into the FSO by transfer.

3. Efficiency Reports:

a. Civil Service Employees:

(1) Procedure: The procedure for preparation of efficiency reports for civil service employees is governed by the Civil Service rules. (Performance Rating Act of 1950, Public Law 873, 81st Congress.) However, the form in use was designed by the State Department and approved by the Civil Service Commission. Copy is attached as Annex A. Three pamphlets (Annexes B, C and D) describe the procedure: A Guide to Supervisors, the Performance Rating Plan and Preparation of Outstanding Performance Ratings. The form is designed for three ratings: satisfactory (with brief narrative appraisal), unsatisfactory or outstanding. The latter two require supplementary statements described in the procedures. An unsatisfactory rating cannot be given unless the employee has been warned in writing 90 days prior to the rating.

(2) Periodicity: Reports are normally prepared annually. New employees receive ratings at the end of six months. Employees assigned to positions having different work requirements receive a rating at the end of six months' service in the new job.

(3) Location of Copies:

(a) Original to Personnel Relations Branch and Employee's Personnel Folder.

(b) One copy to employee.

(c) One copy to Division Administrative Officer.

(d) One copy to Classification Branch.

(4) Accessibility to the employee: The employee receives a copy. He also signs the form twice: once to acknowledge discussion with his supervisor and once to acknowledge receipt of the rating. He may appeal an "unsatisfactory" rating to the Performance Rating Committee and may appeal that decision to the Board of Review. A "satisfactory" rating may be appealed either to the Committee or the Board.

(5) Use:

(a) An employee who receives an "unsatisfactory" rating must be transferred to another job or separated from the service.

(b) An "outstanding" rating gives an employee five retention points and a "satisfactory" rating one retention point for computation for reduction-in-force registers.

(c) Reductions in compensation or demotions "shall be made in all cases where the ratings warrant."

(d) As a significant evaluation paper in an employee's folder, the performance rating affects an employee's selection for promotion.

b. Foreign Service Officers:

(1) Procedure: The procedure is contained in Foreign Service Personnel Circular 96, May 9, 1952 (Annex E) and Foreign Service Circular 175, May 9, 1956 (Annex F). These derive from the Foreign Service Act of 1946, Public Law 724 of the 79th Congress. The form used is Efficiency Report, Form FS-315 (Annex G). The form is prepared by each FSO's supervisor after specific training: "It shall be the responsibility of the principal officer to conduct, or cause to be conducted, training courses for all rating and reviewing officers regardless of previous training or experience" (FSPC 98, para. 6.4). The reports are given a dual review in the field: by a senior officer and by a review panel.

(2) Periodicity: All FSO efficiency reports are prepared as of July 1 each year. As all periods of service must be documented, interim reports are required when a rating supervisor is transferred during the year or when an FSO is transferred during the year.

(3) Location of Copies:

(a) One copy in employee's Performance Folder.

(b) One copy retained by the foreign post and destroyed when the employee leaves the post.

(4) Accessibility to the Employee: The Foreign Service Act of 1946, section 612 states that efficiency reports "...shall be confidential and subject to inspection only by the President, the Secretary, the Under Secretary...etc." But the last sentence of the section further states that "under such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe and in the interest of efficient personnel administration, the whole or any portion of an efficiency record shall, upon written request, be divulged to the officer or employee to whom such record relates." Up to Nov. 1, 1955 an FSO could not see his efficiency report, although he could obtain a summary from the Performance Evaluation Branch, Division of Foreign Service Personnel, Office of Personnel. On that date a congressional committee criticized the Department of State for not adhering to the last sentence of section 612 and an FSO may now see his efficiency reports whenever he is in Washington, D. C.

(5) Use: The efficiency report is one of the key documents in the performance folder. Each year each class of FSO's is reviewed and ranked from highest to lowest (see Foreign Service Circular 133). On the rank order list two lines are drawn: one below which FSO's are not recommended for promotion and one below which FSO's are judged to have failed to perform at a minimum acceptable standard. Officers are promoted only if their names are above the first line. Specific selection-out procedures are in effect for officers below the second line.

c. Foreign Service Reserve Officers: The form used, procedure, periodicity, location of copies and accessibility to the employee are the same for FSR's as for FSO's. In-grade raises are based on efficiency reports and will be withheld if reports indicate unsatisfactory performance. As FSR's are not careerists but are recruited for specific tasks and specific time periods, they seldom receive promotions and the selection-out procedures for FSO's do not apply.

d. Foreign Service Staff Officers and Employees:

(1) Classes 1 - 9 with base salaries from \$10,700 to \$5,075 use the same form, procedures, etc. as the FSO's.

(2) Classes 10 - 22, the lower salary group, are rated on Form FS-205E (Annex H) which is simpler, substituting a check-sheet for thirteen performance factors in lieu of the narrative report required by the other form.

(3) The FSO selection-out procedures do not apply to the Staff Corps. The performance review boards do identify those staff employees whose performance is judged to be below an acceptable standard. To separate them, however, charges must be preferred against them, just as is done for civil service employees.

4. Duties of the Performance Evaluation Branch:

All efficiency reports are sent to the Performance Evaluation Branch. They are reviewed for internal consistency and for adequacy. Mainly for the FSO group, inadequate efficiency reports are returned to the originators with the advice that the reports will hurt the officers' ratings and the request for new reports.

The branch also takes action to obtain overdue reports, quoting the requirements of the Foreign Service Act. The branch has recently had increased success by sending a copy of the follow-up letter to the chief of the post and placing a copy in the personnel file of the delinquent supervisor.